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Istook Helps Oklahoma to Enforce Immigration Laws

Washington, D.C. – Funding to help enforce immigration laws will be coming to Oklahoma as part of legislation that the House passed today, Rep. Ernest Istook (R-Warr Acres) announced. The bill also contains other significant help for Oklahoma law enforcement.

At Rep. Istook's request, the state will receive \$150,000 to provide immigration law enforcement training to state, local and tribal law enforcement officers. Online courses from the Department of Justice will teach officers how to respond to illegal and criminal aliens they encounter during routine law enforcement duties.

"Almost a million people enter the country illegally each year. They don't all remain at the border, but move inland to places like Oklahoma," Istook said. "That's why local and state law enforcement need to be part of our defense against the national security and economic threats created by this immigration crisis."

"It's a federal responsibility to protect our borders, and I've helped put more resources into that effort," Istook continued. "There's also a huge need for greater cooperation at the state and local levels to help enforce our immigration laws, but officers there are often unsure of the laws and of the role they can play. With this new training, Oklahoma's law enforcement officers can help us in this national effort to enforce our immigration laws, just as they often assist in enforcing other federal laws."

State law enforcement will also benefit from \$1 million in funding Istook obtained for a statewide public safety communications system.

"Our state is hindered by an antiquated communications system," Istook said. "This funding will help the Highway Patrol obtain new technology that they need."

The funds are part of the Science, State, Justice, Commerce, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for FY 2006, H.R. 2862, which passed the House by a vote of 397 to 19. Istook, a member of the House Appropriations Committee, helped secure funding for the following additional projects in the bill:

- \$100,000 for the University of Central Oklahoma to purchase high-tech laboratory and diagnostic equipment for the university's forensic science expansion project
- \$500,000 for Enough is Enough, a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting children from Internet pornography and sexual predators
- \$150,000 for A Child is Missing, to assist with missing child recovery efforts in Oklahoma
- \$500,000 for the REI Rural Business and Resource Center in Seminole

The final version of the legislation now heads to the Senate, which is expected to vote on it Thursday.

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